

mouth of the canyon and Henry Grow, who later became famous for the construction of the Mormon Tabernacle, engineered it. On October 13, 1858, the *Deseret News* reported the completion of the bridge, noting that it was "substantially and neatly made and calculated to be of service for many years to the inhabitants of Utah County." Brigham Young, writing to his agent, Horace S. Eldredge, in St. Louis, reported that the company had spent \$20,000 in building the road and the bridge.⁴ The road was completed and in use by November. On the twelfth of that month William M. Wall noted that about 100 teamsters had started to the States by way of Provo Canyon.⁵ The route meant a savings of some sixty miles to teamsters freighting between Camp Floyd and the East.

The crude road that twisted its way up the canyon from Provo City to the grass-covered valley some twenty-five miles distant was especially significant in the early history of central Utah. It became an important artery in the system linking the southern route to California with the continental highway to the East. It afforded easy access to the timber resources of the upper Provo and Weber River Valleys. But most important of all, it made possible the settlement of Wasatch County.

Enthusiasm for settling the Provo Valley had been engendered a year before the building of the road began. In the summer of 1857 Charles N. Carroll, George Jacques, James Adams, and some others who were working at one of the sawmills in Big Cottonwood Canyon heard of the valley and set out to explore it. Starting early one morning from the head of Big Cottonwood Canyon they came over the ridge to Snake Creek, followed down the river and across to the center of the valley to about the present site of Heber City and re-

⁴Letter from Brigham Young to Horace S. Eldredge, November 20, 1858, (Brigham Young University Library).

⁵*Journal History*, November 12, 1858, p. 1.

turned the same day. When they came down to Provo City they told of their explorations, which created some excitement.⁶

Preparations for settlement accompanied the building of the road. James C. Snow, the Utah County surveyor, and a company of interested Provo citizens entered the valley in July, 1858, and surveyed a tract of land one and one half miles square on what is now the north east section of Heber City. The plat was divided into three blocks of 160 acres each with provision for a street four rods wide around each block. The blocks were then divided into twenty acre lots and each person was allowed to claim only one lot.⁷ Later in October of the same year a second company with J. C. Snow laid off another plat of land about one half mile south west of the former and this also was divided into twenty acre plots and claimed by prospective settlers. The two ventures culminated in the establishment of over 100 claims near the center of the valley, which furnishes an indication of the interest in settlement there. An area one mile square was also reserved as the future site for a city.

Interest in the development of the valley was divided between two groups. The abundance of grass and water seemed ideal for stock raising. Those interested in this venture argued that the climate was too cold and the growing season too short for agriculture. There seemed good evidence for this view also. Even in July the first surveying party found that water left in a pint cup overnight had frozen solid.⁸ Yet John Crook, the Carlyle brothers, and many others from Provo City were willing to experiment with farming in the valley.

⁶John Crook, "A History of Wasatch County," *Wasatch Wave*, March 23, 1889, p. 2.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸The Journal of John Crook, MSS, (Daughters of Utah Pioneers Historical Collection, Heber, Utah, 1888), p. 35.

Get

Old Fort Helen

comes

out

of "Under

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Skies"

cruited from Provo and either sent to raid the Army supply trains or stationed in the canyons to defend the Mormon settlers. A good many men engaged in moving families south in the exodus of 1858.

By June of 1858, Provo City sheltered many saints who had fled their northern homes at the coming of Johnston's Army. Brigham Young, the most prominent visitor in the city at the time, called a meeting at the bowery on June 6, 1858, to discuss building the road up Provo Canyon. There were now multiple reasons for beginning construction. Gardner had noted the plentiful supply of timber in the upper valleys of the Provo and Weber Rivers some six years earlier, and the time had come when the timber was needed. President Young in his speech to those assembled remarked:

A road up Provo Canyon is much needed, and we want ten or twenty companies of laborers to go on it forthwith in order to finish it in about fifteen days so that you can go into the valleys of the Weber where there is plenty of timber.

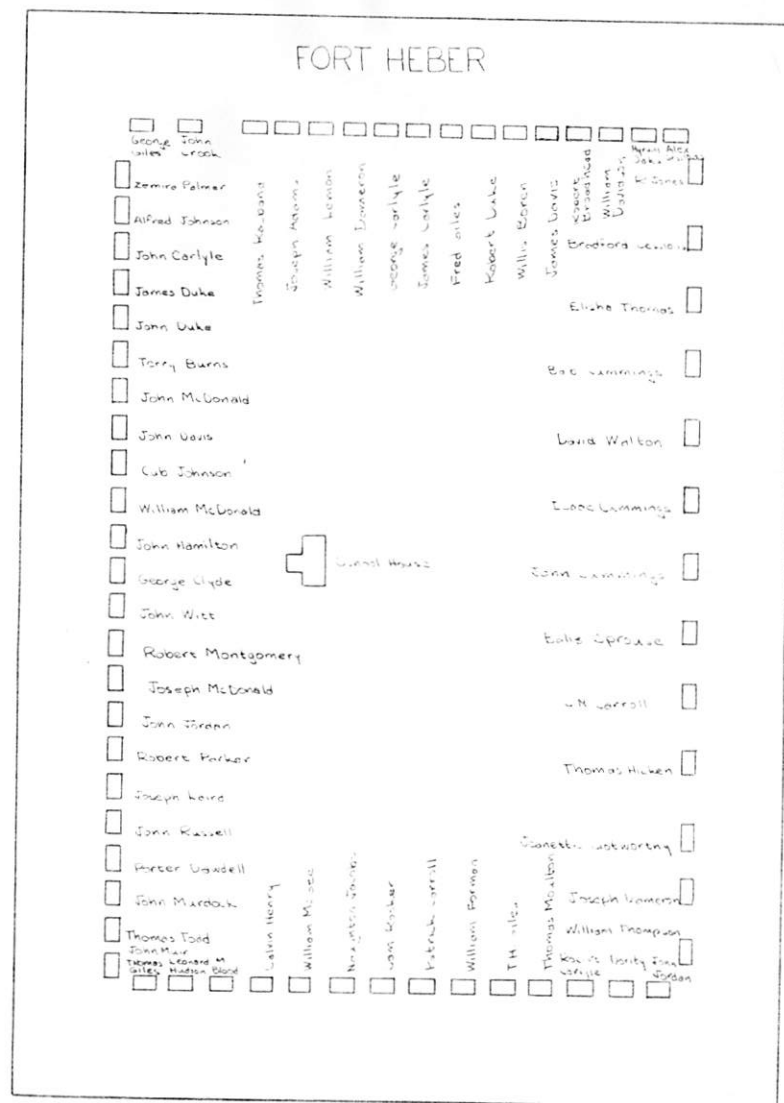
I understand that a company has been chartered by the legislative assembly to make that road if those men will come forward we will take the responsibility of making it. We shall need about 500 laborers.²

The next night the group, including President Young, Heber C. Kimball, Daniel H. Wells, several of the twelve apostles, and a large number of brethren, reassembled at the bowery. Here the Provo Canyon Company was organized. Brigham Young took 200 shares of stock. Feramorz Little was appointed to superintend the making of the road and W. G. Mills was named clerk of the Company.³

The company worked the rest of the summer completing the road. The river had to be bridged near the

³*Ibid.*, June 7, 1858, p. 1.

³*Ibid.*, June 7, 1858, p. 1.



Fort Heber plan showing where each family was located

40 Rais Square